

seventy-five (2475); making the grand total about 4,900, who had been delivered by the enemy a short distance above the city, at the north-eastern branch of the Cape Fear River, since our occupation of the town. Of these, Gen. Terry's sick and wounded were, of course, the best provided for, since they had occupied the town from the date of its capture, and felt, more than anything else, the want of ambulances and other means of transportation, which had been necessarily taken with the main column on its advance northward. Those arriving from Gen. Sherman's command were, many of them, quite destitute, having been on the march through the enemy's country for about two months, ever since the date of Gen. Sherman's leaving Savannah. They needed clothing and food as well as rest and medicines. But the greatest and most pitiful necessities were among our returned prisoners. No description can do justice to their miserable condition, because nothing but an actual inspection of them, in considerable numbers, can show that the wretched faces and figures that present themselves everywhere are not the isolated and exceptional effects of severe illness, but the general result of a uniform and long-continued process of starvation and misery. There were degrees, of course, in which this condition was more or less marked. The better cases were walking about the streets, perhaps barefooted, or with no other clothing than a pair of white cotton drawers and an old blanket or overcoat, both equally ragged. In these, the slow, dragging gait, listless manner, and cavernous, inexpressive look of the face, together with the general emaciation, formed a peculiar aspect by which they alone attracted the attention of the passer-by, and by which they were at once distinguished from the other convalescent soldiers. There was no occasion to inquire in Wilmington which were our returned prisoners; after half a day's experience, any one could distinguish them at a glance. Many of them, who had strength to crawl about in this manner, were prevented from doing so by the want of clothing. Major Randlete, the Provost Marshal of Wilmington, told me that on one day forty of these men came into our lines *absolutely as naked as they were born*. I inquired of a considerable number

of them, whom I saw in the hospitals confined to their beds—naked or with only a shirt, and covered with a hospital blanket—what had become of their clothing, and was told that they had thrown away what remained as soon as they could obtain shelter, because it was so ragged, filthy and full of vermin. One of them, on being told that the Sanitary Commission had sent them flannel shirts and drawers, caught at the word with a childish eagerness, and repeated the good news to his companions with a faint half-imbecile smile as long as I was within hearing. With the great majority of the feebler ones, personal cleanliness was a thing which they appeared to have entirely forgotten. They no longer retained sufficient strength either of mind or body, to appreciate or correct the degradation to which months of unavoidable uncleanness had reduced them. In the most extreme cases the condition of the mind, as well as the expression of the face, was absolutely *fatuous*, and the aspect of the patient was not that of a strong man reduced by illness, but that of an idiotic pauper, who had been such from his birth. Nevertheless, several of the surgeons informed me that the condition of the patients had visibly improved since their reception, and that I could not then form an adequate idea of what it was when they entered our lines. In that case it must have been lamentable beyond description.

The testimony of both men and officers was uniform as to the causes of their unnatural condition. These causes were—1st., starvation, and 2d., exposure. Only such officers and men as could procure money, were able to obtain anything like sufficient nourishment. Some of them told me that during the entire winter they had received absolutely no meat; a pint of corn-meal, often with the cob ground in, sometimes with and sometimes without salt, a handful of "cow peas," and sometimes sorghum molasses, constituted their usual ration. When in hospital, they had only very thin corn-meal gruel and a little corn-bread. To the debility occasioned by this insufficient food, was added that resulting from exposure. It was a common thing for a prisoner, immediately on being taken, to be stripped of his clothing—shoes,